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AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
HONOLULU, HAWAII



ITALIAN HEMSTITCHING

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How to Use Italian Hemstitching

This stitch is one which has many uses. It is effective on place mats and napkins, table cloths, and guest towels. It can also be used effectively on clothing--yours or your daughter's--always remembering that since threads must be pulled to do it, the part of the garment using it must be cut on the straight of the goods. This confines it to collars, cuffs, and possibly the front of the dress or blouse, or as bands on a full skirt.

Materials Suitable for Italian Hemstitching

Linen is the most satisfactory material to use, and, even though it is expensive, it lasts a long time. Perhaps you have a linen dress which is worn in spots but has enough good material left to make several mats or, at least, some fingertip towels. Lacking real linen, rayon butcher linen is the next choice. There are many fabrics on the market today that are made of nylon, rayon, or acetate, yet look and feel very much like linen and can be used as such.

What Thread to Use

Since Italian hemstitching forms the pattern by pulling the threads together, you do not want to call attention to the stitching by using a contrasting color. Use heavy-duty thread in a color to match your linen. If this is not available, use two strands of six-strand embroidery cotton in a matching color. Matching linen thread, a little finer than the threads of the material, is the best.

Needles to Use

You will need two needles, both with large eyes.

1. An embroidery needle, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches long.
2. A blunt-pointed tapestry needle, the smallest size available, not more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches long.

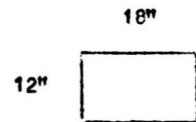
Other Supplies Needed

1. Foot rule or yardstick (not a tape measure)
2. Shears
3. Small embroidery scissors with sharp points
4. Pins

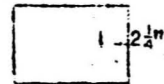
Now Start to Work

First, make a finger-tip towel because it's quick and easy.

1. Cut your material 12 x 18 inches.

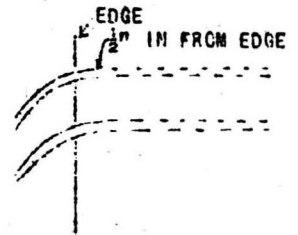


2. Measure $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches up in the center of the 12-inch end. Pull up a horizontal thread.



3. Pull up this thread until you can see where it goes. Snip the thread 2 inches in from either end and pull it back to within $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch of the side, leaving the side hem solid.

4. Now pull out a second thread right next to the first, which leaves a space two threads wide. If the linen is very fine, you may want to pull three threads.



5. Next count over and skip four threads and pull the next two, clipping them 2 inches in from the end and working them back to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch as you did on the first threads.

6. Using the matching heavy duty thread or single strand embroidery floss, buttonhole over the area at the ends where the threads are hanging. Hold the threads on the wrong side and buttonhole over them on the right side, keeping the stitches close together. Trim the threads as close to the buttonholing as possible on the back.

7. Fold $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of the raw edge under, bring the turned edge down to the top edge of the drawn threads. Baste in the hem.

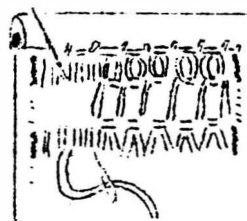
8. Now you are ready to start hemstitching. Work from the wrong side and from right to left, using the pointed embroidery needle, holding the hem up.

9. Fasten the thread in the hem. Pass needle under four threads, over the same four, and under two, bringing the needle out in the center of the four threads, catching through the hem.

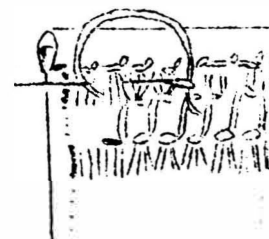


10. Repeat this stitch all the way across. Be careful to keep your groups even, as these groups of four determine the groups for the Italian hemstitching.

11. You are now ready to start the Italian hemstitching. Hold the right side of the goods toward you, hem up, and work from right to left. Thread tapestry needle and fasten the thread in the hem.



ITALIAN
HEMSTITCHING



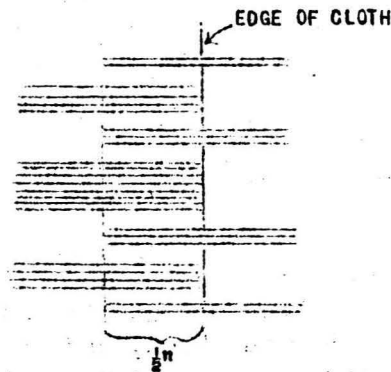
ITALIAN
HEMSTITCHING

12. Bring needle out in upper space where threads were drawn. Take thread straight down over the four cross-threads, under four threads ahead, and around these four threads in the space where the threads were drawn in the lower row. Pull each stitch snugly, but not tight enough to pull the towel out of shape. An even tension is most important.
13. Next go diagonally on the back, from lower right to upper left. Bring needle out at top, go around the four threads at the top and come out at the top.
14. You now have a "box" around three sides of the "four-thread square." The left side of this first box makes the right side of the next box.
15. Continue this stitch all the way across.
16. Measure up $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches at the other end of the towel, pull threads in the same way, hemstitch the hem, and work the stitch the same way.
17. Now turn in the $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch hem on the side and hem by hand, bringing the top and bottom hems out over the side hems, and blind-stitch the edge. Do not miter towel hems.

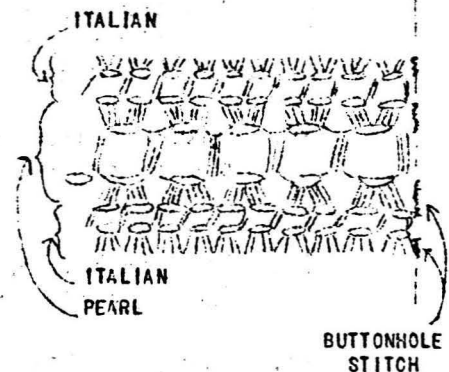
Pearl Stitch

1. Rows of Italian hemstitching can be combined to form elaborate borders. One of the most interesting is the pearl stitch.
2. It is well to learn this stitch on a small towel, then apply it later to place mats or napkins. Make the towel 12 x 18 inches.
3. Measure in $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches from the end. Pull threads the same as for simple Italian hemstitching, that is, cut them 2 inches in from each side and work them to within $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the edge.
4. In pulling threads for the Pearl stitch:

Pull	2	threads
Skip	4	"
Pull	3	"
Skip	8	"
Pull	3	"
Skip	4	"
Pull	2	"



5. Buttonhole over the threads pulled out and hemstitch the hem.
6. Do a row of plain Italian hemstitching over the four threads nearest the hem.
7. Repeat the plain Italian hemstitching over the bottom four threads, being careful to pick up the same groups of four threads as in the row above.

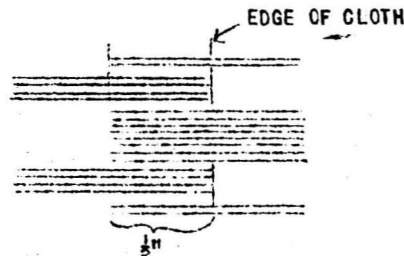


8. Now you are ready to do the Pearl stitch over the eight threads left in the center. Starting again at the right edge, with the hem up and the right side of the work toward you, do exactly the same stitch, but take up two groups of four.
9. The only difference is that you go around the space between the "box of eight" twice. This is because you want it to correspond with the top and bottom areas, where there is already a line of thread from the plain Italian hemstitching. You will need to pull up the "pearls" more tightly than the smaller boxes in the plain Italian hemstitching.
10. Finish the other end with a single row of plain Italian hemstitching and hem edges same as for the first piece.

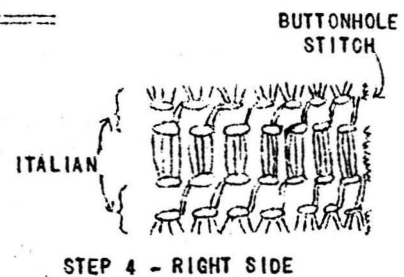
Fourth, Quarto - (Italian for Four Points)

1. Cut towel 12 x 18 inches.
2. Measure in $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches from one end. Pull threads to within $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of both edges, the same as for other towels.
3. Pull the threads as follows:

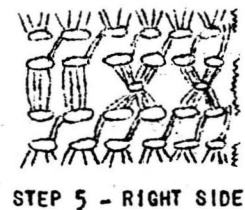
Pull	2 threads
Skip	4 "
Pull	8 "
Skip	4 "
Pull	2 "



4. Do two rows of plain Italian hemstitching over each of the rows of four threads, making "boxes of fours." Be sure that the lower row is directly below the top row. If even one thread is placed in the wrong group, you must take it out.



5. Next, turn the work to the wrong side. Starting again in the upper right-hand corner, fasten your thread in the hem. Let the thread come down back of the first leg, take a buttonhole stitch around the center of the first two legs, then continue diagonally down the second leg, through the plain Italian hemstitching at the bottom, up through the next plain Italian hemstitching box, up along that leg, tying the two together in the center and following up the next leg diagonally. Continue this all the way across.

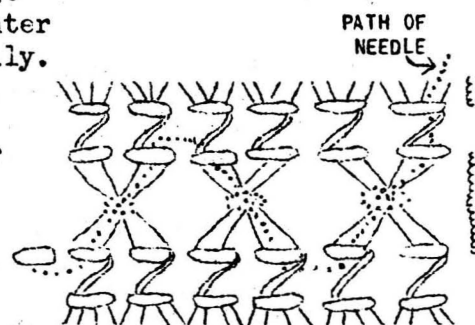
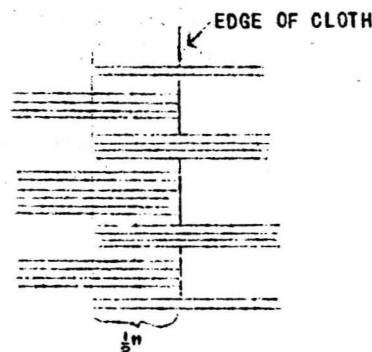


6. Finish other end and sides same as for Towels I and II.

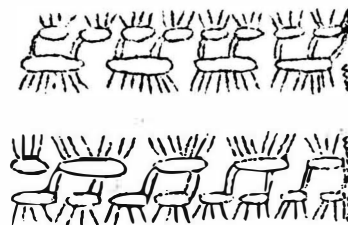
Rickrack Stitch

1. Cut towel 12 x 18 inches.
2. Start pulling threads $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches from end.

Pull	2 threads
Skip	4 "
Pull	4 "
Skip	6 "
Pull	4 "
Skip	4 "
Pull	2 "



3. This stitch is done by going across the towel only twice. Start on the right side in the upper right-hand corner. Go straight down over the four-thread section. Take the needle under and pick the four threads. Then take it under diagonally up to the top four threads ahead. Back around these four threads at the top and bring needle out at top.



RICKRACK STITCH

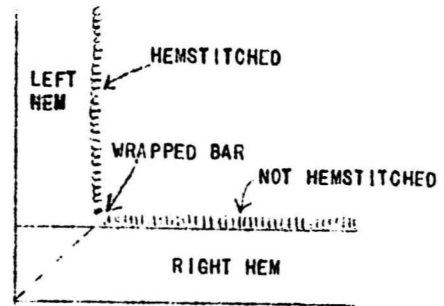
4. Next, go straight down, then ahead four on the wrong side, back around the eight threads at the bottom. Go around the eight threads a second time.
5. Now go diagonally across the eight threads on the back, from lower right to upper left, go back around the four threads at the top, and bring needle out at the top. Now you are ready to start the next group. Continue across row.
6. When you finish this row, turn the work around, so the hem is down, start again from the right edge. However, start with a single group of four first, then take up eight, so the points will alternate with those of the first row.
7. Finish other end and edges same as Towels I, II, and III.

Corner Tricks

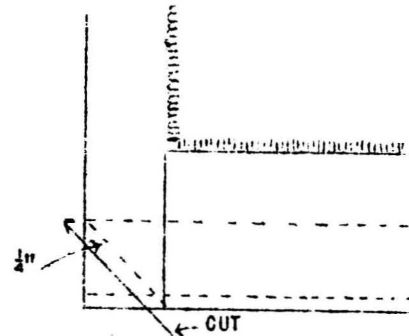
Now you have made four towels, each with a different type of Italian hemstitching. The other thing you need to know is how to work the corners when you are using the hemstitching on place mats, etc. This time make a place mat.

1. Cut linen 14 x 20 inches.
2. Decide whether you want to do Pearl stitch, Punto Quattro, or Rickrack stitch, and pull threads for the design you select, starting $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in from the edge.
3. Be sure to snip the threads 2 inches from the edge and work them back to $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches from each edge so a solid hem is left. Pull threads for a second band of the same design 3 inches in from the border on the ends.
4. Buttonhole on right side over loose threads, holding them on wrong side. Trim off loose threads.
5. Crease and pin or baste the hem even with the edge of the drawn threads.

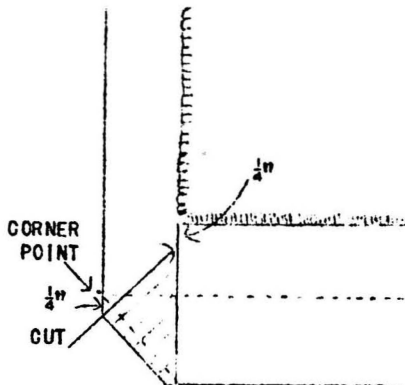
6. Start hemstitching near the middle of one side, mitering the corners as you come to them as shown in figures 6A, 6B, 6C, 6D. Try to keep the work flat, not puckered or stretched. When you come to the corner wrap the last cross thread firmly with the thread with which you are hemstitching as shown in figure 6E. Continue around the corner and wrap the last threads on the next side. Be sure to wrap from top to bottom so your thread will be in the right place when you are ready to start hemstitching again.



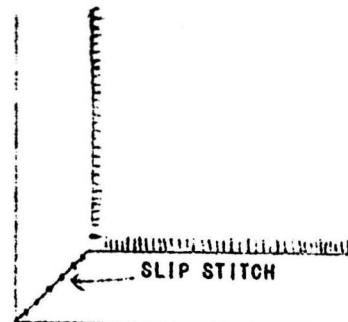
6A. CREASE AN EXACT DIAGONAL FROM CORNER POINT TO DRAWN THREAD CORNER.



6B. OPEN LOWER HEM AND CUT OFF CORNER POINT $\frac{1}{4}$ INCH OUTSIDE CREASE LINE.



6C. CUT POINT OF TOP LAYER OF MATERIAL FROM LEFT HEM BEING CAREFUL TO CUT $\frac{1}{4}$ INCH BELOW CORNER POINTS.



6D. CREASE RIGHT HEM INTO PLACE ON DOTTED LINES SHOWN IN FIG. 6C. AND SLIP STITCH CORNER.



6E. WRAPPING THE BAR

Finishing

Press the finished article on the wrong side, using a Turkish towel as a pad and dampening the linen before pressing.

References

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Books I - VI

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